

How encouraging are political parties towards young people?

Opinion polls on the young people involved in political parties in Kosovo



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Democracy for Development

Demokraci për zhvillim

Demokratija za razvoj

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Pristina, April 2020

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List of Abbreviations

AAK	The Alliance for the Future of Kosovo
AKR	New Kosovo Alliance
D4D	Democracy for Development
LDK	Democratic Alliance of Kosovo
LVV	Self-Determination Movement
NISMA	Social-Democratic Initiative
PDK	Democratic Party of Kosovo
PSD	Social-Democratic Party

I. Introduction

According to the latest population census data in Kosovo, young people of age 15 to 24 years constitute one-fifth (1/5th) of the general population. Many of them are informally involved in political processes through civic activism while they are not formally represented in the parliament nor they are on the lists of candidates of political parties. For the parliamentary elections of 2019, only 17% of candidates of age up to 34 were presented in the lists of political parties. In the Assembly of Kosovo, only three (3) members of the parliament out of 120 members are under age 25.

As it has been indicated in a study conducted by IDEA International¹ on global election participation trends, that declining voter turnout is linked to a decline in young people's confidence of participating in elections. This trend is not expressed among voters who vote for the first time in Kosovo, considering that they are the age group with the highest turnout in the elections, while the curve begins to fall on voters who are over 25 years old.² The list of voters in Kosovo includes approximately 30,000 new voters every year. Gaining the support of young people is almost decisive in winning elections. Reaching out to young voters presents an electorate advantage that should not be ignored, and thus political parties should

¹ "Voter Turnout Trends around the World". International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA). Link: <https://www.idea.int/es/publications/catalogue/voter-turnout-trends-around-world>

² "Voter Turnout Among Youth of Kosovo". IFES. Link: https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/2016_ifes_turnout_among_youth_of_kosovo_eng.pdf

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consider preferences of this age group when drafting policies and promoting them to try to appeal to their interests.

In order to understand more closely what young people who are active in political parties think and how they see the future, D4D conducted an initial assessment of how encouraging political parties are towards young people as part of this research study with a subset of recommendations how political parties should engage more with young people.

The opinion polls were conducted with young people who are active in the main political parties [sometimes referred to as young party activists] in Kosovo: LVV, LDK, PDK, AAK, NISMA, AKR and PSD. In total, there were 107 respondents that were part of the survey, between ages of 18 and 22 years, 72% of which were men and 28% women. As part of this sample, the respondents were members of political parties on the average for at least six (6) years. The respondents were asked to complete the questionnaire in an electronic format on March 23-31, 2020. The sample used to conduct this survey is self-selection sampling, which is not representative neither in the level of political parties nor for youth of political parties in general. The questionnaire contained 22 questions divided in four (4) general categories: (i) participating in elections, (ii) involvement in decision-making, (iii) barriers confronted or identified and (iv) their visioning for the future. The questions have been the same for all political parties. The collected data were cleared of possible logical errors and were first summarized as general data, and then separated on the basis of each political entity.

II. Main Findings

In Kosovo, employment of young people is very challenging, given that the overall unemployment rate is around 30%, while about half of young people aged 16 to 24 are unemployed.³ For many, having a party membership card is an important entry permit to find a job in the public sector. However, according to our research, a potential job entry does not seem to prompt young people to join political parties. From what respondents have stated in our research, the political program is what attracts them to join political parties, despite the fact that not all political parties have them at least in writing.

In Kosovo, young people who are active in political parties attend many trainings. However, there is still need for more training, and certain measures should be taken to involve youth in political processes. Despite the positive trends of political parties to include young people in the list of candidates for the elections, approximately two-thirds (2/3rds) of

respondents have stated that they were not given the opportunity to be included in the electoral lists. Accordingly, the selection process of entering the lists is relatively difficult for young people. However, being excluded from the list does not necessarily present a career advancement obstacle within the political party. Instead, lack of financial support and lack of cooperation between young people present an advancement challenge for youth.

In general, the participation of young people in internal discussions of political parties involving decision-making is satisfactory, particularly when it comes to youth-related policies. The respondents, young people participating in this research, feel that they are well represented even by the party leadership. However, the youth engagement in political parties ultimately comes to attending meetings while their involvement in political actions is extremely low.

³ "Extreme unemployment among youth between 15 and 24 years of age in Kosovo." *Ekonomia Sot*. Accessed on: <http://ekonomiasot.com/papunesi-ekstreme-tek-te-rinjte-ne-kosove-te-moshes-15-deri-24-vjec/>

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a. Political engagement motives

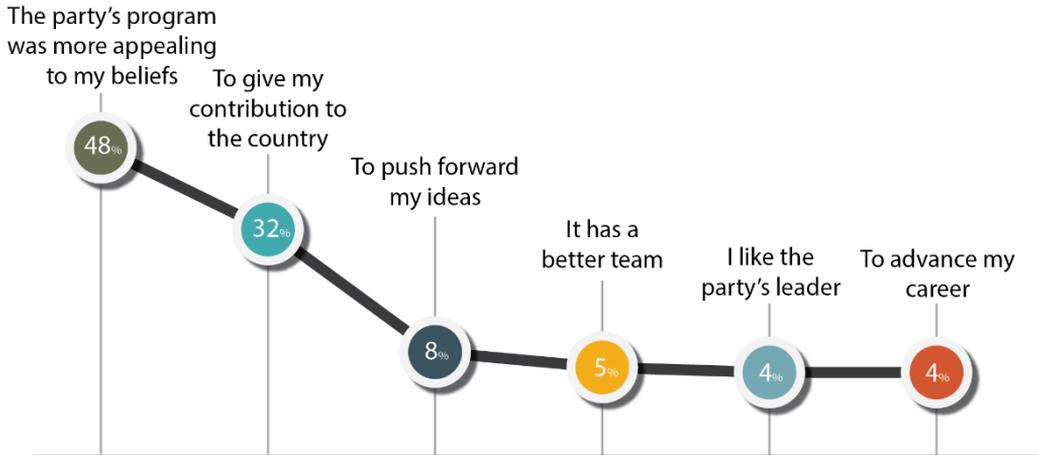


Figure 1. What was the motive for becoming a member of the political party?

The main reason why young people join a political party is due to their affiliation with the party program, with 48% of respondents stating that the party program was more appealing to their beliefs/positions, followed by 32% of respondents stating that their contribution for the country was as the main motive to join the political party. From what has been gathered from this research, it seems that political leaders exercise

limited influence on young people's decision to join a political party, with 4% of respondents stating that their sympathy towards a political leader was the main motive to join a political party. Similarly, 4% of respondents stated that career advancement was one of the main reasons what motivated them to join a political party.

b. Capacity-building

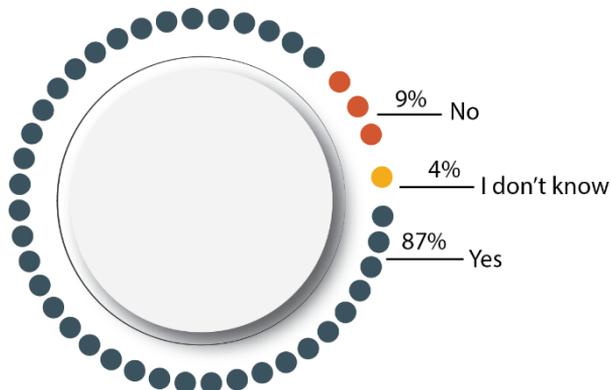


Figure 2. Has the political party provided any training for you?

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The commitment of political parties towards capacity-building programs for young people appears to be high, considering the scale of positive answers gathered from respondents on the question, "Has the party provided any training for you?" Thus, 87% of respondents stated that they

were given the opportunity to attend trainings while 13% stated that they were not given such opportunity. These trainings largely covered topics on leadership and public communications. Despite such positive trends, 77% of respondents called for additional trainings.

c. Participation in the election process for public office

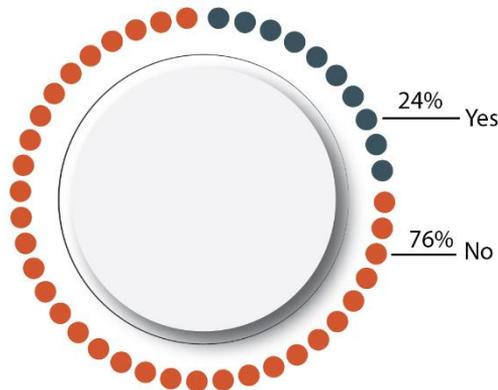


Figure 3. Have you ever been a candidate for public office/position?

Young people from political parties have limited opportunities to be included in the list of candidates to run for public office. Thus, 76% of respondents stated that they have

never run or competed for a public position, while only 24% of them stated that they had such an opportunity.

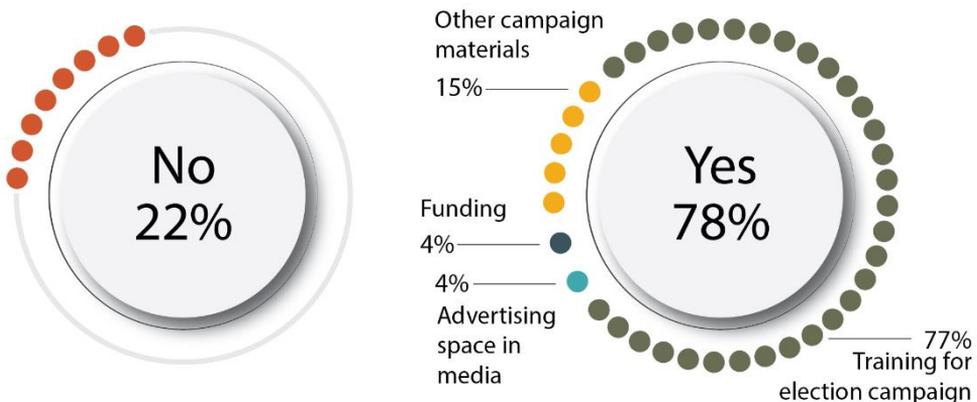


Figure 4. Have you received any support from the political party?

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Of young people who ran for public office, 78% of respondents stated that they have received support from the party, mainly training for election campaigns and support in terms of campaign materials, such as posters and business cards, while 22% of respondents stated that they have not

received any support from the political party.

In order to be part of the election lists of political parties, the majority of young people consider it difficult or very difficult.

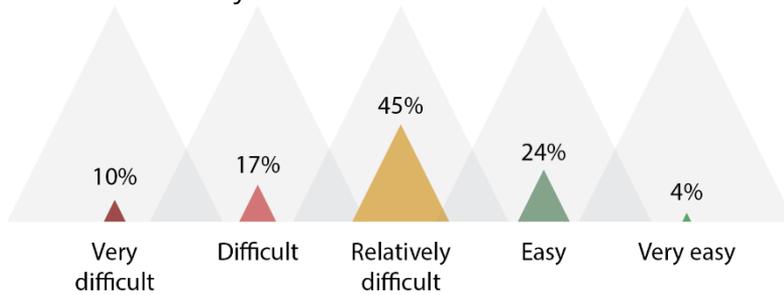


Figure 5. How difficult is for a young person to be part of a list of a political party to run for elections?

d. Policymaking and youth inclusion in decision-making

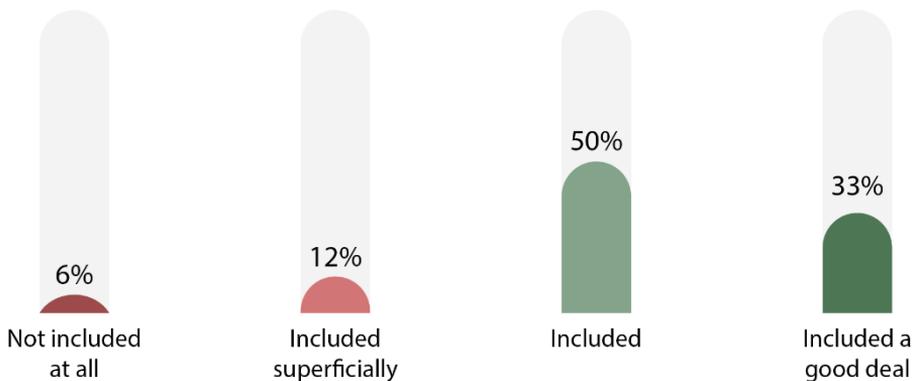


Figure 6. To what extent are young people included in internal discussions of political parties in decision-making process?

Young people do not always participate in internal discussions of political parties when decisions are made. According to the research findings, 18% of respondents stated that they have not been included at all or not thoroughly included, while 50%

stated that they have been included in internal party discussions. Meanwhile, 33% of respondents stated that they have been included a great deal in internal party discussions.

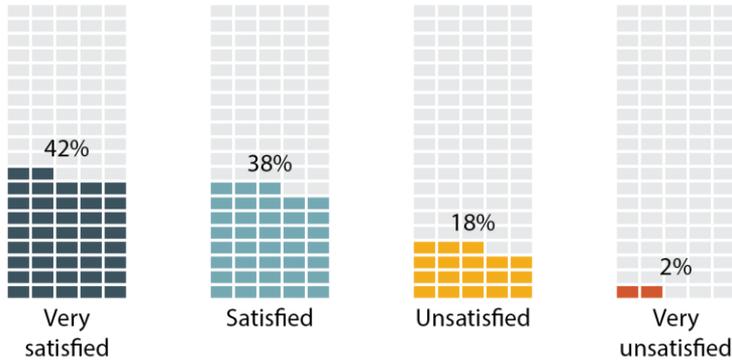


Figure 7. Are you satisfied with the program of your political party concerning youth policies?

Youth satisfaction with the political party program is extremely high. Accordingly, 80% stated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the program, while only 2% stated

that they were not satisfied at all. It also appeals to young people when political parties promote policies in their favor.

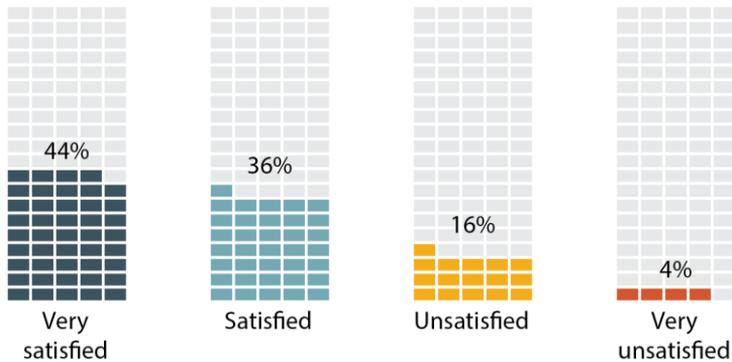


Figure 8. To what extent are you satisfied with youth representation in the leadership structures of your political party?

There is also a high percentage of respondents who have been satisfied with the youth representation in the leadership structures of political parties. Meetings in forums have been frequent, with 40% of

respondents stating that they have met more than five times a month, while only 14% of respondents stating that met once or not met at all within a month.

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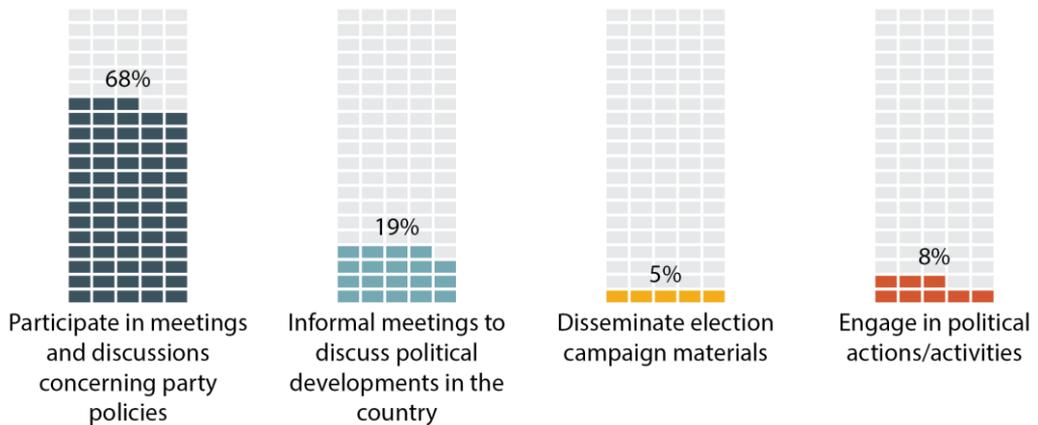


Figure 9. In which party activities do you engage more often?

The most frequent activity in which young people engage include meetings and discussions, with 68% of respondents stating that they have participated in such activities concerning party policies, followed by

19% of respondents stating that they have engaged in informal meetings to discuss political development in the country. Only 8% of respondents stated that they have directly engaged in political actions or activities.

e. Career advancement barriers for young people

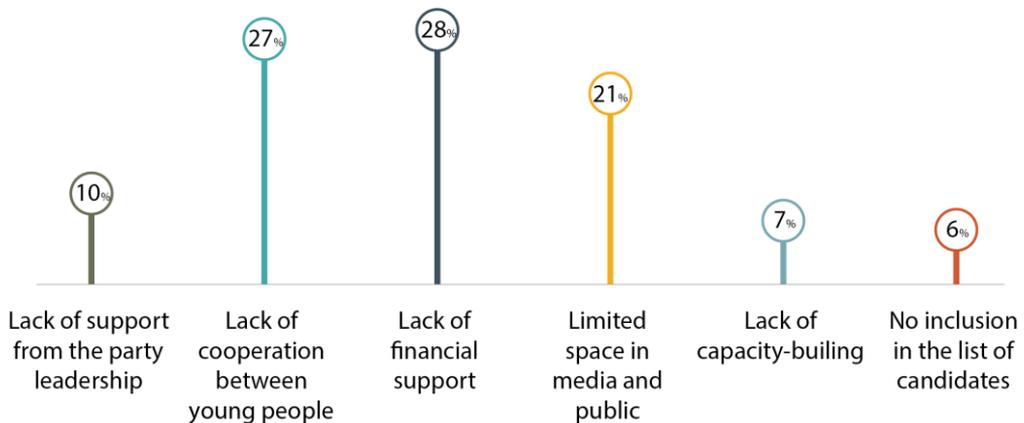


Figure 10. What do you think are the main barriers for the advancement of young people in your political party?

There are a number of barriers that young people experience in their political parties with regards to career advancement. Among the listed barriers, lack of financial support

(28%), non-cooperation among young people (27%) and the restriction of media space and meetings with the public (21%) have been considered as the main barriers. The limited

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inclusion of young people in the list of candidates has been seen as a barrier by only 6% of respondents.

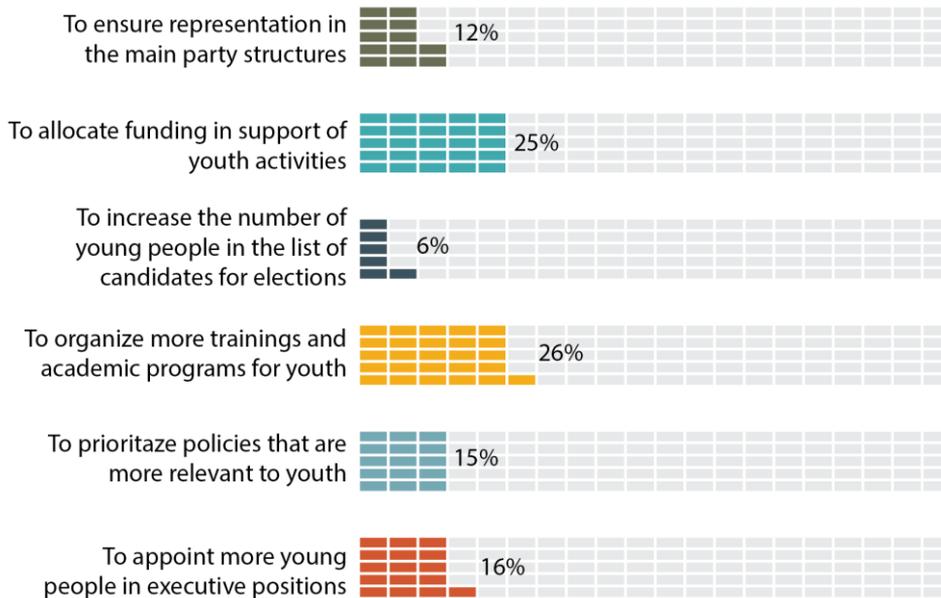


Figure 11. What should your political party do to increase the participation of young people in politics?

As part of the measures to be taken by political parties to increase youth participation in politics, more training (26%) and the allocation of financial resources to support youth activities

(25%) are required. Respondents stated that the best way for political parties to reach out to them is through social media (41%) and door-to-door meetings (35%).

f. **Benefits from engaging in the political party and ambitions for the future**

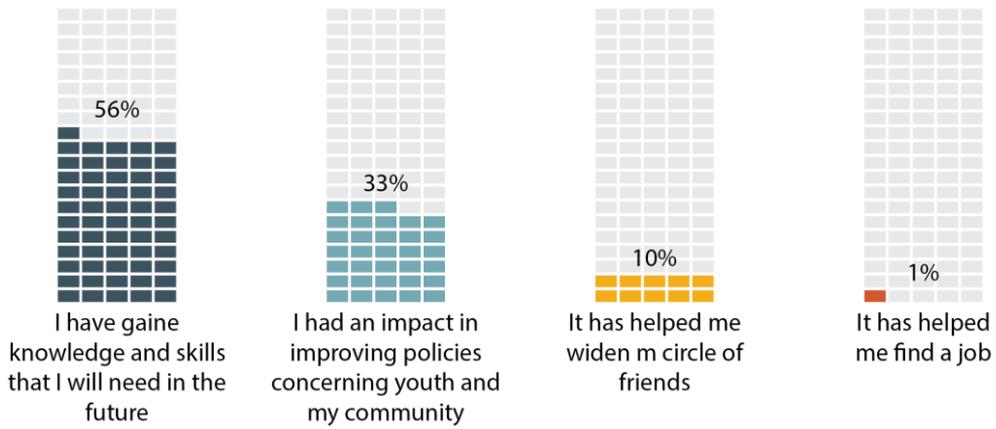


Figure 12. What were the benefits from engaging in the political party?

The main benefits from engaging in the political party include young people gaining knowledge and skills that are essential for the future (56%) and the impact young people have made in terms of improving policies concerning them or their community.

As for future ambitions, more than half of the respondents stated that they have been elected in Municipal Assemblies, followed by respondents who have been elected in the Kosovo Assembly (16%).

III. Findings by Political Parties

a. Political engagement motives

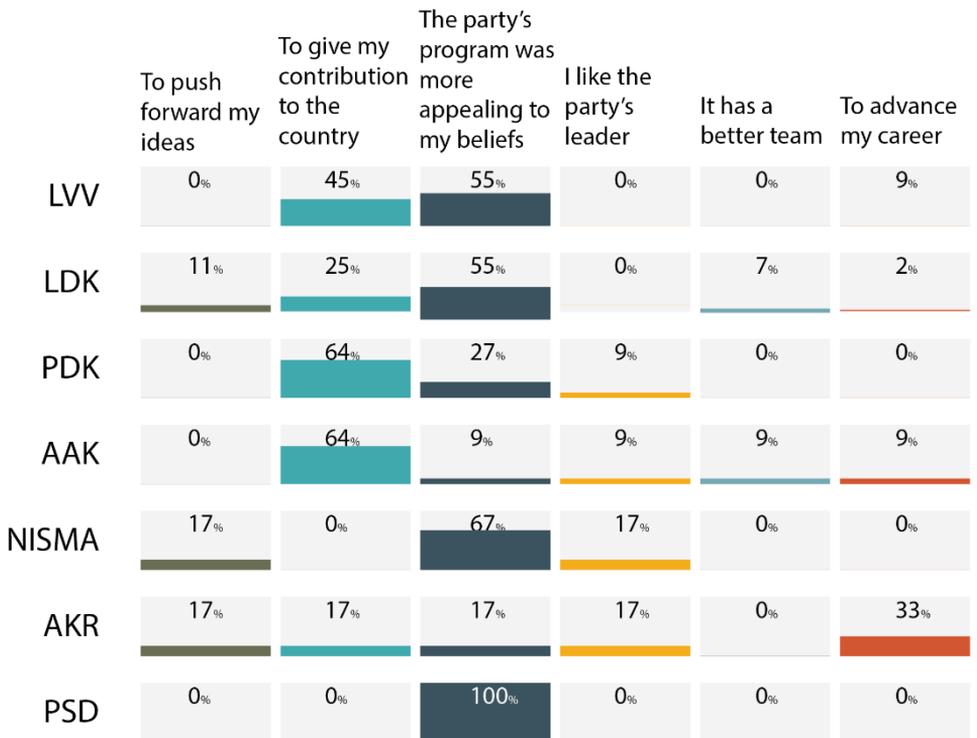


Figure 13. What was the motive for becoming a member of the political party?

As the research findings indicate, the political program is the main reason why young people join VV, LDK, NISMA and PSD. As for the young people who are active in PDK and AAK, the main reason why they join

the party is their sense of contribution given to the country. As for AKR activists, career advancement is the main motive of joining the political party.

b. Capacity-building

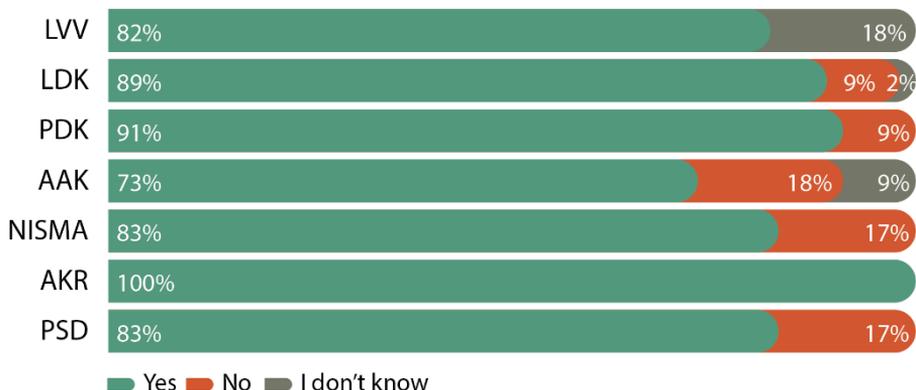


Figure 14. Has the political party provided any training for you?

Most of youth from the political parties declared to have had the chance to benefit from the trainings offered by their political party. Thus, all the AKR respondents stated that they have attended trainings,

followed by those of PDK (91%) and LDK (89%). AAK youth have the lowest rate of attendance in training compared to other political parties (73%).

c. Participation in the election process for public office

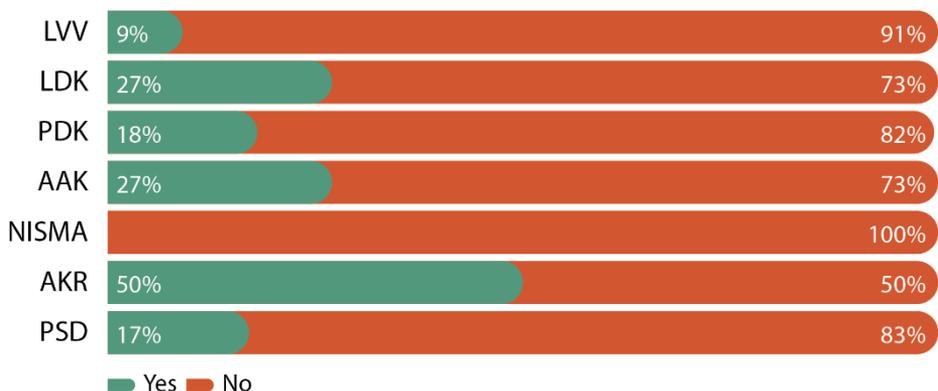


Figure 15. Have you ever been a candidate for public office/position?

The participation of young people in running for a public office/position is extremely low. Of all respondents, AKR is ranked the highest, with 50% of AKR young activists stating that they have competed for public positions,

followed by young activists of LDK and AAK (27%). None of the NISMA activists stated that they were given the opportunity to run for a public position.

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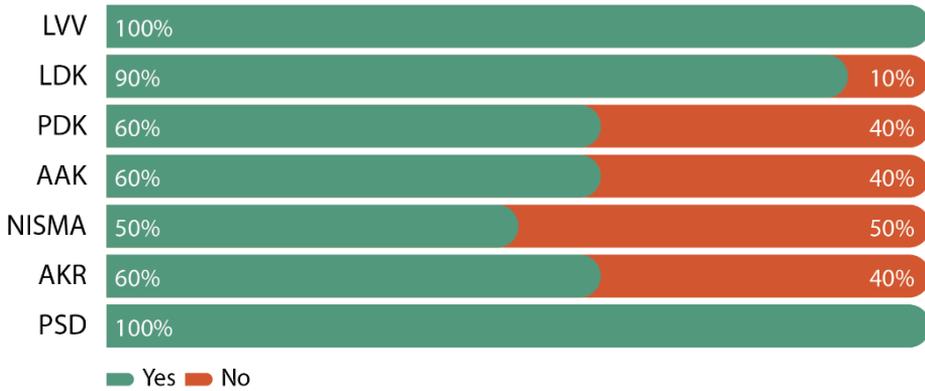


Figure 16. Have you received any support from the political party?

Out of those who had the opportunity to run for a public office/position, support has been provided to all

candidates by VV and PSD, while the least support was provided by NISMA.

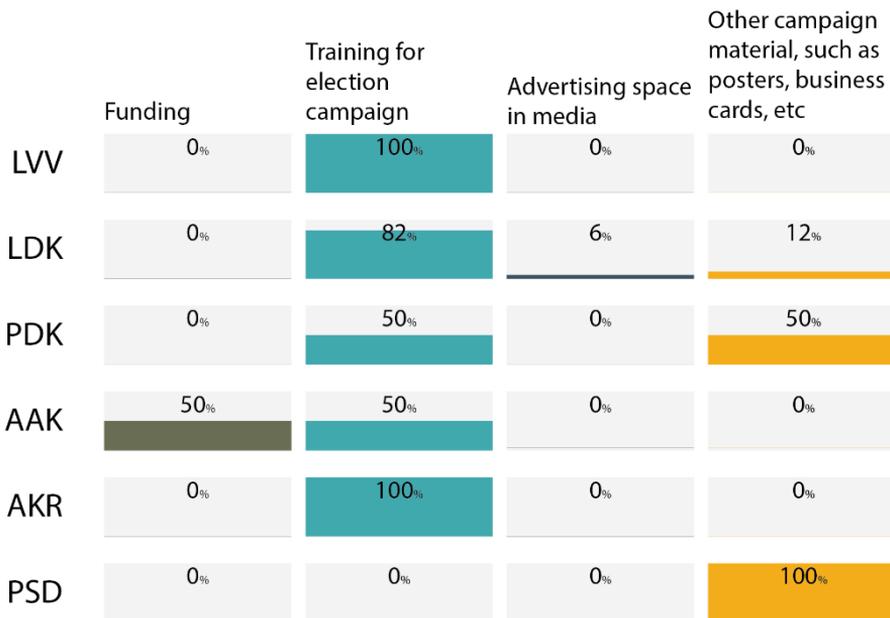


Figure 17. What kind of support have you received from the political party?

When respondents were asked what kind of support they have received from the political parties, all VV and AKR respondents stated that they have received training in support for elections. PSD activists stated that they have received campaign

material. LDK activists stated that they have largely received trainings but also campaign materials and advertising space. AAK activists were the only respondents who declared that they have received funding support.

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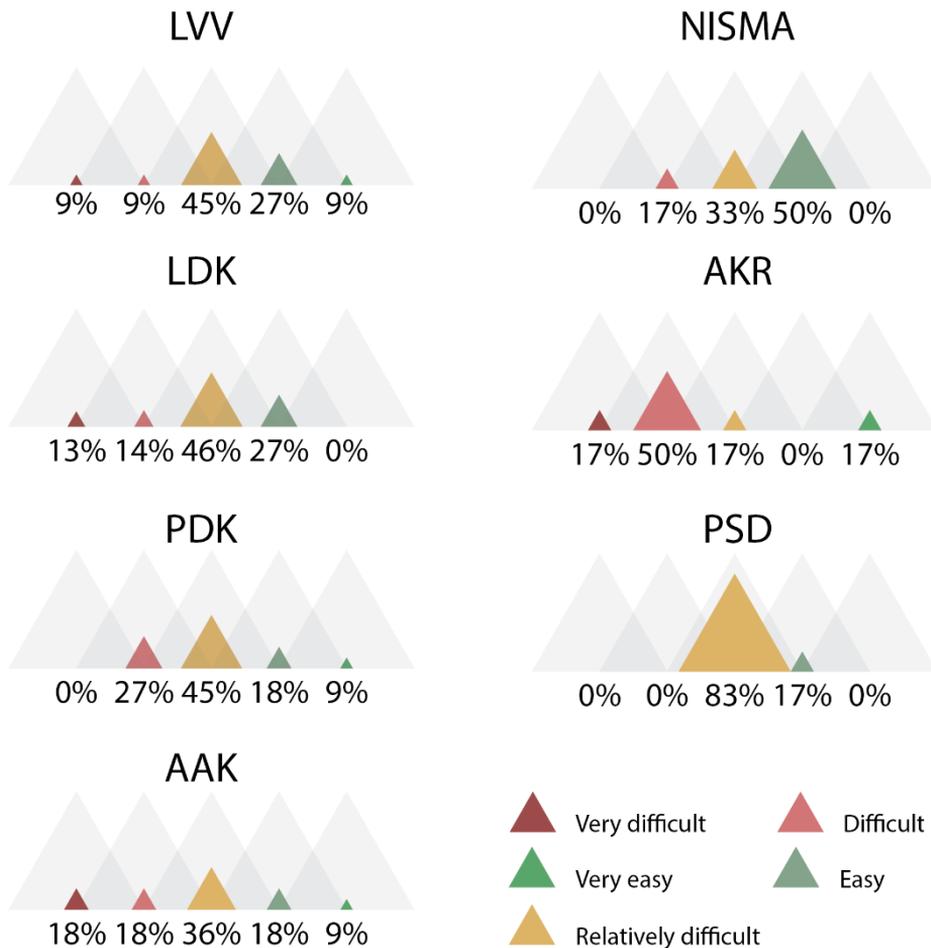


Figure 18. How difficult is for a young person to be part of a list of a political party to run for elections?

As the research findings indicate, the process how candidates have entered in the election lists of political parties it is challenging. In particular, this process is extremely difficult for young people as it has been confirmed by our research. A

relatively large percentage of AAK and AKR respondents ranked this process as “very difficult.” Meanwhile, an absolute majority of PSD activists consider it relatively difficult.

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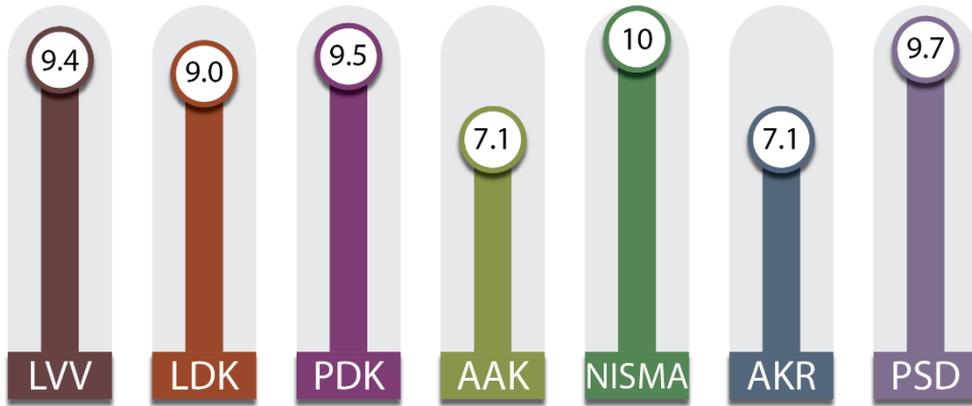


Figure 19. How friendly do you consider your party to be towards young people?

In addition, the respondents were asked to assess how friendly they consider the party to be towards young people, in terms of policies, support for capacity building and space to participate in elections. From a rating of 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest), it turns out that NISMA has been rated

with maximum points by its young people, despite the fact that none of the interviewees have had the opportunity to be included in the list of candidates, in elections. The lowest ratings are for AAK and AKR.

d. Policymaking and youth inclusion in decision-making

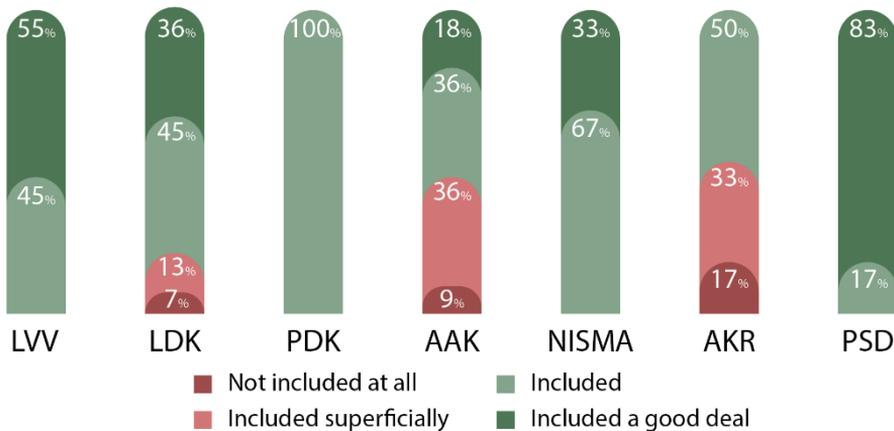


Figure 20. To what extent are young people included in internal discussions of political parties in decision-making process?

In general, young people are involved at a satisfactory level in internal discussions of political parties in the process of decision-making. However,

based on what respondents stated, young activists are not included enough, particularly in AKR (17%), AAK (9%) and LDK (7%). The parties where

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youth are more included consist of PSD (83%) and VV (55%).

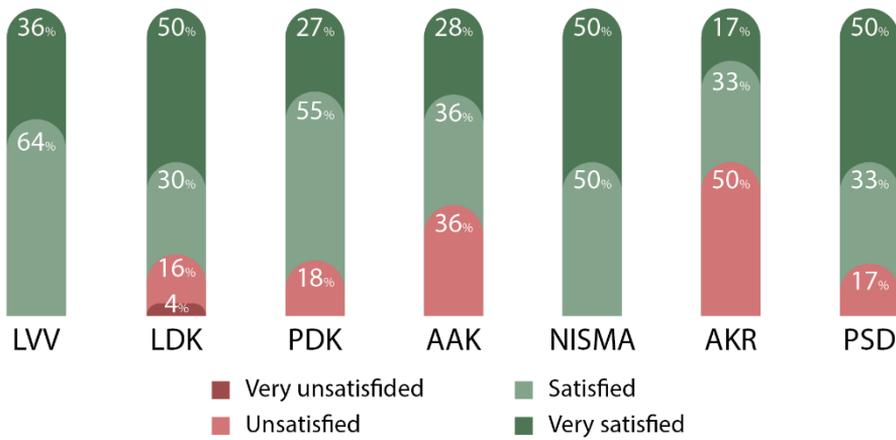


Figure 21. Are you satisfied with the program of your political party concerning youth policies?

The party program is one of the main reasons what motivates young people to engage in political parties. As the research findings indicate, 50% of NISMA and PSD respondents have been satisfied with the program of the party concerning youth policies, followed by 36% of VV respondents.

While LDK young activists seem overall satisfied with their party's approach of addressing youth policies, a small percentage of them seem dissatisfied, with 4% of respondents stating that they are 'very dissatisfied' with the program of the party concerning youth policies.

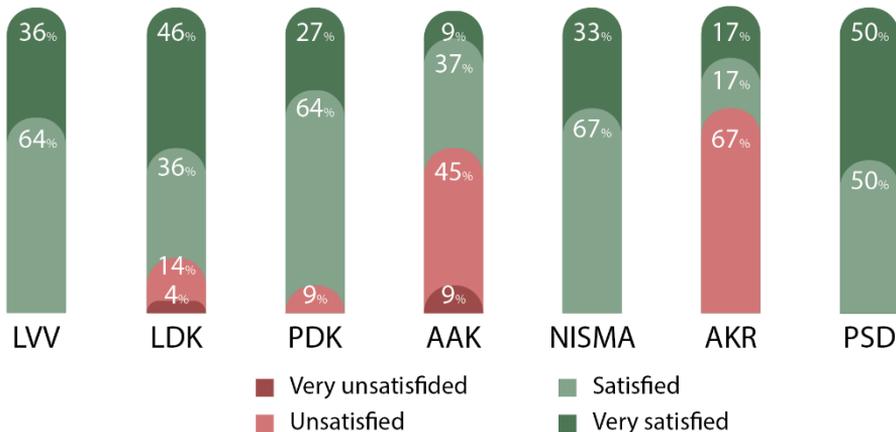


Figure 22. To what extent are you satisfied with your party in terms of promoting youth policies?

The commitment of political parties to promote policies that advance the

role of youth is essential for them to be more attractive to young people.

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As the research findings indicate, PSD respondents are more satisfied with the party's commitment in this regard, followed by LDK young activists who have been satisfied with the party's commitment to promoting youth

policies. As for other parties, AAK and AKR respondents seem far more dissatisfied with their party's approach of promoting youth policies.

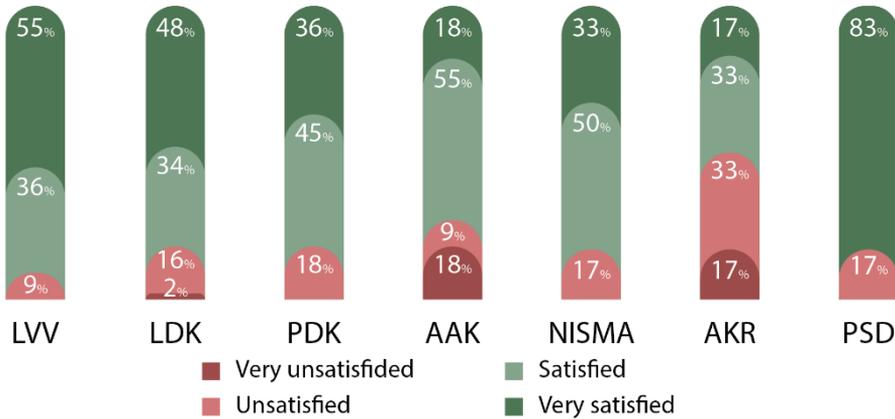


Figure 23. To what extent are you satisfied with youth representation in the leadership structures of your political party?

The youth representation in the leading structures of political parties is usually limited to the chairmen of youth forums. As a result of having low representation, even the views of young people fail to be communicated in decision-making forums. The satisfaction levels with regards to youth representation in decision-making structures varies

from party to party. PSD young activists are more satisfied with their representation, where 83% stated that they are very satisfied, followed by those of VV with 55% and LDK with 48%. The most dissatisfied with representation in decision-making structures are the young people of AAK with 18% stating as not at all satisfied, and AKR with 17%.

e. Career advancement barriers for young people

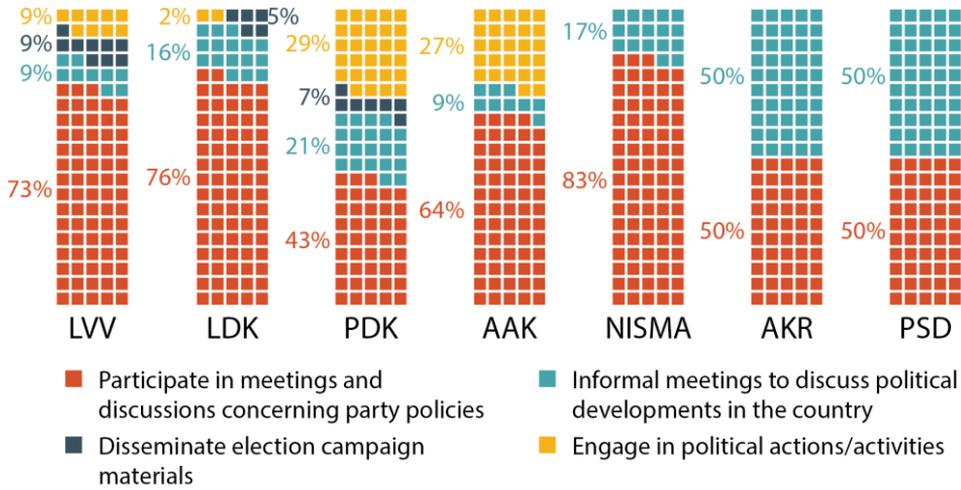


Figure 24. In which party activities do you engage more often?

The use of the potential of young people is often overlooked by political parties. As it has been indicated by the research findings, meetings have been viewed as the main activity in which young activists engage – 83% of NISMA respondents stated that they attend meetings followed by LDK (76%) and VV (73%). The responses are more mixed as far as other

activities, especially among young activists of VV, LDK, and PDK, who also engage in political activities, disseminating election campaign materials and informal meetings to discuss political development in the country.

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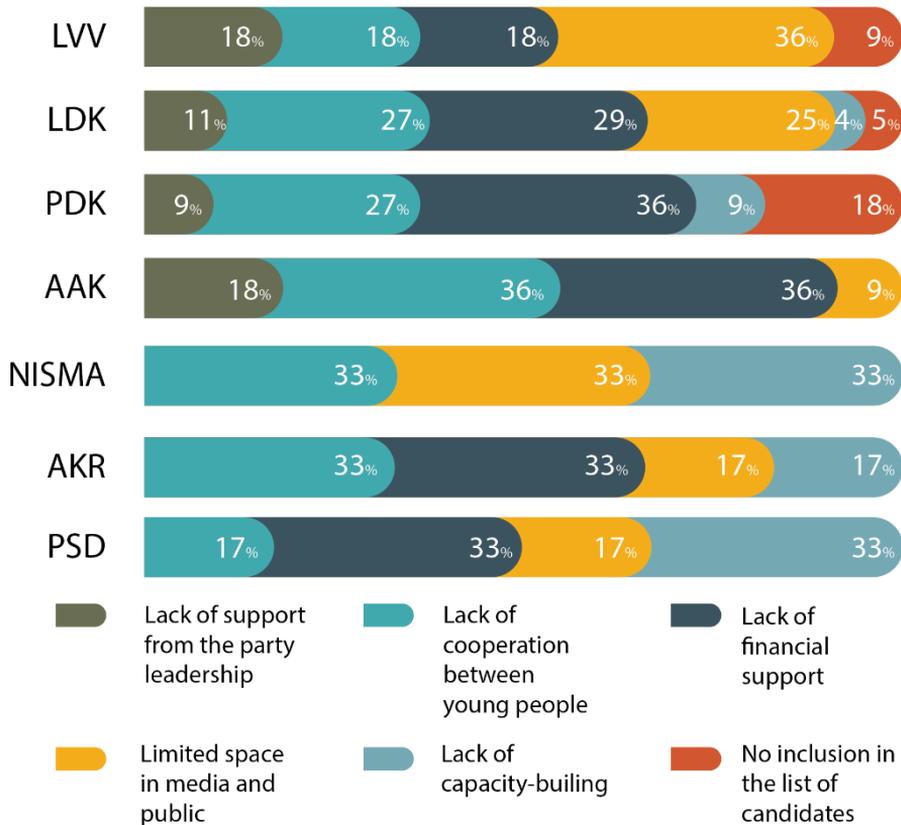


Figure 25. What do you think are the main barriers for the advancement of young people in your political party?

In Kosovo, young people face many barriers in terms of the advancement of their political career. One of the main barriers is lack of cooperation between young people. AAK young activists seem to cooperate far less since 36% of AAK respondents have stated that to be the case, followed by NISMA and AKR at 33%. Better

cooperation has been reported among youth of PSD and VV. For the latter party activists, limited space in media and public has been reported as one of the main barriers for their advancement in the political career (36%) while lack of funding has been reported as the main barrier for LDK (29%) and PDK (36%).

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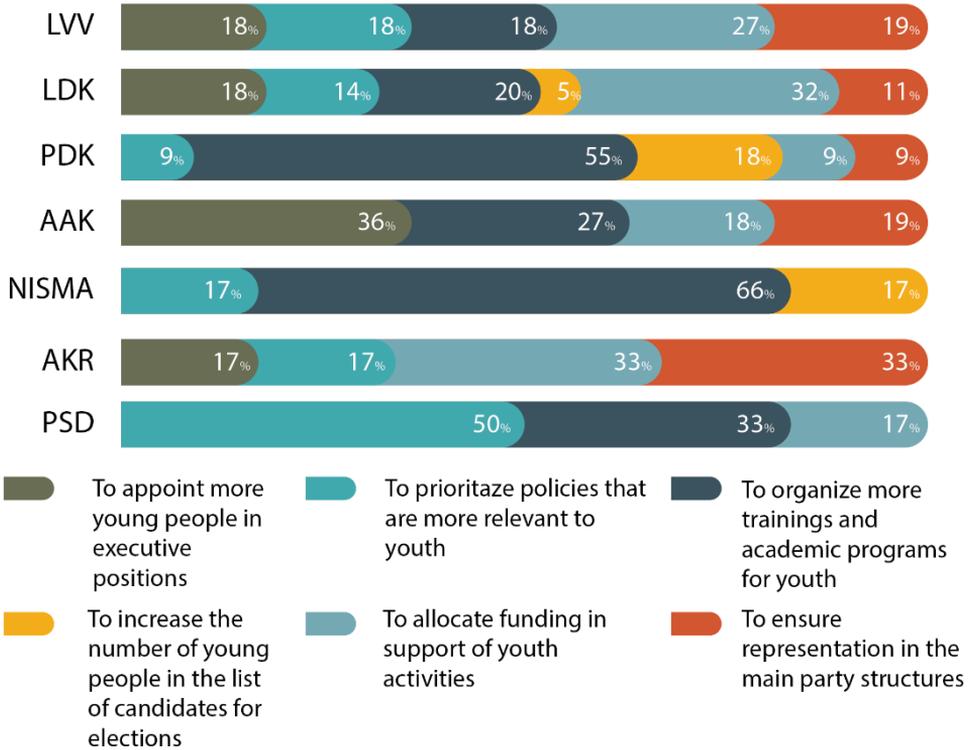


Figure 26. What should your political party do to increase the participation of young people in politics?

For young activists of VV, allocating the funds to support youth activities is seen as the main political measure to increase participation of young people in politics. A similar assertion has been also made by young activists of LDK and AKR. PDK and NISMA young activists see more trainings

and academic programs as more important. AAK young activists are more in favor of young people being appointed in executive positions while PSD activists want to give priority to policies that are relevant for young people.

f. Benefits from engaging in the political party and future ambitions

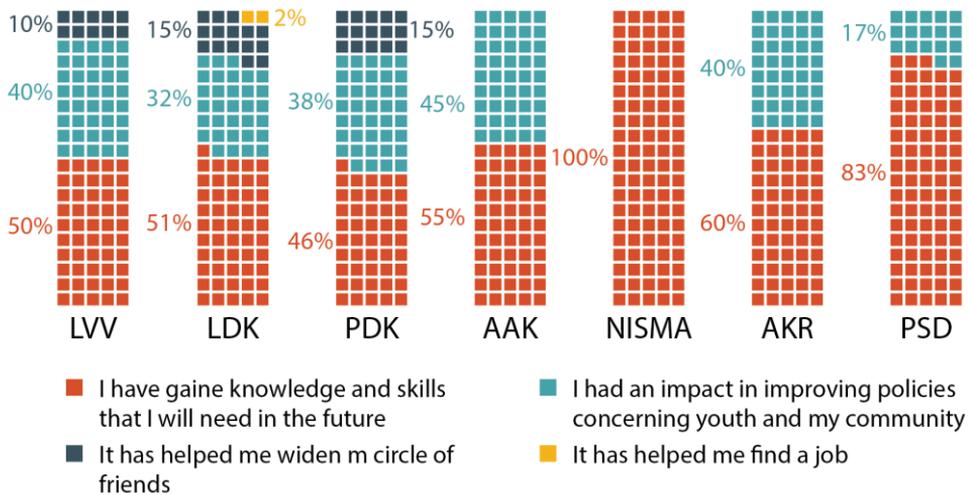


Figure 27. What were the benefits from engaging in the political party?

There are no benefits from engaging in politics. Gaining knowledge and skills is the main benefit for the majority of young members of political parties. This is more pronounced among NISMA members who have stated that gaining knowledge and skills is the main benefit to engaging in the political party followed by the absolute majority of PSD (83%) who also claim this to be the case.

Other benefits include having an impact in improving policies concerning youth and their community and widening the circle of influence. Meanwhile, only 2% of LDK young activists stated that their engagement in the political party has helped them find a job.

IV. Recommendations

General recommendations:

Political engagement motives

Political parties should be more active in recruiting and motivating young people to become members of political parties. This should be done by using online registration platforms, presenting before student and youth forums, as well as social media campaigns. The party program should be presented to interested young people, as well as inform them of the possibilities that they have for influencing in public policies through political engagement.

Capacity-building

Even though the number of young people that have attended trainings organized by political parties is encouraging, it was seen as necessary to provide more trainings to cover specific subjects, which could help young people build their capacities and develop their skills, useful when running for public office. Capacity building will not be limited only to training. The development of an internship program in the Kosovo Assembly, designed to engage youth to assist the Members of Parliament of their party, could be a win-win approach.

More young people included in the lists of the candidates of political parties

Youth inclusion in the list of political parties in order to run for election is quite low, where only one-fourth(1/4th) of the respondents had such an opportunity. Therefore, political parties should reckon the potential of young voters, and that they make the large percentage of the electorate. It would be mutually beneficial if political parties included more young people in their electoral lists.

Greater financial support for young people participating in elections

Most of young people that had the chance to compete in elections had some support from their political party, which is fairly positive. Considering that many young people are unemployed, and the fact that they are unable to cover election campaign expenses, political parties need to allocate special funds to support young people running in the election as candidates.

Greater inclusion of the young people in decision making and policy drafting

Young people should have an active role when it comes to internal consultation processes of political parties for policy drafting and decision making. Members of the youth forums, if operational, should be consulted to get to know the needs of the youth of our country, and thus develop the policies based on their requests and needs. In addition, young people need to have

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a say in the decisions of the party in general. Young people should be guaranteed adequate representation in all leading structures of political parties, without excluding the application of quotas. Another option would be for political parties to use online platforms for conducting discussions among young people on policies and programs. Standardized questionnaires can be developed to obtain the data needed for members' preferences.

Diverse activities

Most of the time of party engagement for young people is attending regular meetings and holding informal meetings with their political party colleagues. Political parties must take into account the potential that youth have to offer, and on this basis draft specific strategies on how to best serve this potential. Activities need to be diversified and young people need to be involved in these activities depending on their ambitions/qualifications.

Promoting cooperation between young people

Young people involved in political parties find it very difficult to advance within political parties and with many obstacles on the way forward, especially due to the lack of financial support and the lack of cooperation among young people. To enable a well-deserved internal competition and a friendlier environment, political parties must develop special programs that promote cooperation among young people and provide the necessary financial support. Organizing democracy camps is a good opportunity to foster internal cooperation and create the necessary cohesion.

The Democracy for Development (D4D) Institute was established in April 2010 by a group of analysts who were increasingly worried that the state-building exercise had neglected democracy.

D4D's vision is to promote an active and educated citizenry that participates fully in the public space and utilises the public arena of representation and decision-making to deliberate and build consensus over resource allocation that is efficient, smart, long-term, and that brings about equitable development.

D4D influences specific policy, promotes a cross-sectorial approach to problem solving, and tackles the institutional routine of decision-making by recommending incremental improvements and operates with maximum effectiveness in order to fully promote Kosovo's stabilization and democratic development.

For more information about D4D's activities please visit our website: www.d4d-ks.org.

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